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ABSTRACT

The writing program described in this lesson plan guides students in grades 3 through 8 in composing cinquain poems, a five-line form that uses the syllable count of two-four-six-eight-two. During the two 50-minute lessons, students will: describe the basic conventions of cinquain; interpret examples of cinquain; characterize the relationship between structure and meaning in cinquain; and compose a cinquain that describes a familiar person, place, or thing. The instructional plan, lists of web resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. Sample cinquains, a cinquain graphic organizer, and a cinquain reflections sheet are attached. (PM)

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Composing Cinquain Poems with Basic Parts of Speech

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Grade Band

3-5
6-8

Estimated Lesson Time

Two 50-minute sessions

Overview

Cinquain ("cin-kain") is a five-line form that uses a syllable count of two-four-six-eight-two. A "cinquain" (from cinq the French word for five) usually follows this organization:

Line 1: a one-word line, a noun, that gives the poem its title

Line 2: two adjectives that that describes what the poem is about

Line 3: three action -ing verbs that things the subject of the poem does

Line 4: a phrase that indicates a feeling related to the subject of the poem

Line 5: a one-word line, noun, that sums about the poem is about, essentially renaming it

From Theory to Practice

Apol and Harris. 1999. "Joyful Noises: Creating Poems for Voices and Ears." *Language Arts* 76(4), March: 314-322.

> Apol and Harris's article explores ways teachers build interest leading students to create original poems. This exercise is one of several scaffolding experiences that the teachers use to "lead students beyond a superficial encounter to a deeper understanding and appreciation of poetry" (316). Through reading cinquain and then writing their own, students move from simply reading the poems to analyzing the poems and, ultimately, composing poems that match the format.

Following this assignment, students might go on to write and read more sophisticated poetry (additional ideas are included in Extensions and Web Resources). The lesson might also be complemented with poems by Naomi Shihob Nye, Pat Mora, Nikki Giovanni, or Shel Silverstein.

Student Objectives

Students will

- describe the basic conventions of cinquain.
- interpret examples of cinquain.
- characterize the relationship between structure and meaning in cinquain.

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- compose a cinquain that describes a familiar person, place, or thing.

Resources

- Sample Cinquain Handout
- Cinquain Graphic Organizer
- Cinquain Reflections Worksheet
- Writing Poetry Like Pros
- The Dia Center for the Arts Web Site
- "Bringing Poetry and Children Together" Cyberbrief
- Serious Play: Reading Poetry with Children
- Seasonal Haiku Lesson Plan
- Sharing Poetry With Children

Instructional Plan

Resources

- Sample Cinquain Handout
- Cinquain Graphic Organizer
- Cinquain Reflections Worksheet

Preparation

1. This lesson would follow class discussion about basic parts of speech. As a continuation and application of the concepts learned on parts of speech, in this lesson, students write poems which rely on different parts of speech for each line.
2. Make copies of worksheets for students as necessary, and be sure to evaluate the poems in the AMAZE collection to ensure that examples are appropriate for your students.

Instruction and Activities

Session One: Learning about Cinquain

1. Share examples of cinquain with your students. You might visit the Dia Center for the Arts collection of cinquain by students at Booker T. Washington Middle School 54 in Manhattan. Or you might compose your own examples or compose examples with your students, before students write individually or in small groups. A student reproducible of sample cinquains is also available.
2. You or the students might read the poems aloud. Try reading some of the cinquain more than once to show how different words can be emphasized and to talk about line breaks. See "Joyful Noises: Creating Poems for Voices and Ears" for more information on reading poetry aloud.
3. Invite them to look for similarities and patterns among the cinquain that you read as a group. To help students notice the patterns, write several of the poems on the board or on a handout with similar lines parallel (all first lines parallel, all second lines parallel, and so on).
4. Students should be able to extract the basic elements of these poems. You might lead students through the exploration process by asking them to think aloud about these questions:
    - How many lines do these poems have?
    - What do you notice about the words on the first line? (second, third, etc.)
    - Which words seem most important to each poem, and why?
    - How do the lines relate to each other?
    - How does the structure (the organization of the lines) relate to the meaning? If you

rearrange the words, how does the meaning change?

Session Two: Writing Cinquain

Students will likely recognize most of the characteristics of the cinquain. To make the form more manageable for students as they write their own cinquain, modify and revise their list of characteristics to follow this organization:

Line 1: a one-word title, a noun that tells what the poem is about
Line 2: two adjectives describing the title
Line 3: three -ing action verbs
Line 4: a related phrase
Line 5: a synonym for the title

Here's an example:

Sheepdog
Gentle, shaggy
ambling, rambling, shambling
a rollicking hayrick of unruly hair
Sadie

Once you and your students establish the characteristics of a cinquain, students can use the Student Reproducible Cinquain Graphic Organizer to compose original poems of their own. Students can work individually, with partners, or in small groups. Once students have finished their poems, the cinquains can be shared with the entire class.

Extensions

- Make stapleless books out of the cinquain.
- Illustrate the cinquain on a sheet of paper with colored pencils or fine-line markers.
- Write other types of poetry (see web resources below) such as haiku and sestina.
- Create a bulletin board or school Web site anthology of your cinquain.

Web Resources

The Dia Center for the Arts
http://www.diacenter.org/prg/educat/poetry8-240/cinquain.html

A collection of cinquain by students at Booker T. Washington Middle School 54 in Manhattan. All these poems are appropriate for students, and along with the cinquain examples, you'll find haiku and other poetry. See the index (http://www.diacenter.org/prg/educat/poetry8-240/index.html) for background information on the class.

Serious Play: Reading Poetry with Children
http://www.poets.org/exh/Exhibit.cfm?prmID=10

The Academy of American Poets Web site has tips that help "translate [students'] energy, once aroused and captured, into the desire to read poetry seriously, to do the intellectual work necessary to gain a basic mastery of the literary art." The site includes excerpts to recommended poems and excerpts books on teaching poetry to children by Jim Trelease, and by Kenneth Koch.

Sharing Poetry With Children
http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1994/2/94.02.02.x.html

Roberta Mazzucco, the site's author, explores "the question [of] how a teacher can sustain a conversation about poetry" with an explanation of her own classroom experience, teaching techniques, and lesson plans.

Bringing Poetry and Children Together

http://www.ncte.org/elem/Cyberbriefs/poetry.shtml
This teacher's tip sheet shares tips for bringing poetry into the classroom with specific methods that you can use immediately with students as well as suggestions for poetry to share and resources where you can learn more.

Seasonal Haiku
http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=39
In this Grades 3-5 lesson plan, students write and illustrate original haiku based on the season of the year.

Student Assessment/Reflections

While students work, use kidwatching techniques to observe and monitor students' progress.

1. Once the activity is complete, provide verbal feedback as individuals or groups share their work with the class. Commentary might focus on the students' feelings about the person, place , or thing described in the cinquain (e.g., "Your poem suggests that you really love your dog. Was it hard to choose just what to say in just five lines?), particularly interesting word choice (e.g., "You choose the word ornery to describe your dog. That's a word that means 'stubborn or cranky.' Can you tell me something ornery that your dog has done recently?"), and your own reaction or connection to the poems (e.g., "Your poem reminds me of my first dog, Taffi. Especially when you say that your dog is "a playful bundle of trouble." That's a good description of a puppy.")

2. After students have shared their cinquain with the class, students could reflect on their own and their classmates's poems.

3. Students could discuss their reactions out loud or use the cinquain reflections worksheet to record their thoughts.

NCTE/IRA Standards

4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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read•write•think

International Reading Association NCTE marcopolo

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Sample Cinquains

puppy
ornery, naughty
growling, jumping, chewing
a playful bundle of trouble
Boxer

tree
white, tall
reaching, bending, fluttering
leaves and twigs in the wind
aspen

penguin
black, white
waddling, swimming, leaping
a tuxedo in the cold water
emperor

party
happy, cheerful
singing, eating, playing
my eighth birthday party
perfect

apple
red, delicious
crunching, chewing, eating
my favorite snack
apple

rodeo
loud, busy
roping, riding, exciting
dozens of horses in the arena
stampede

keyboard
fun, new
reading, laughing, writing
you have 6 new messages
e-mail

truck
big, long
driving, speeding, passing
tractor trailer on the highway
semi

racing
fast, zip
buzzing, rushing, flying
drivers on the track
NASCAR

dessert
cold, creamy
eating, giggling, licking
cone with three scoops
ice cream

Name_____

Date_____

Cinquain Graphic Organizer

A cinquain is a five-line poem that describes a person, place, or thing.

dessert	?	a one-word title, a noun
cold, creamy	?	two adjectives
eating, giggling, licking	?	three -ing participles
cone with three scoops	?	a phrase
ice cream	?	a synonym for your title, another noun

Use this organizer to write your own cinquain.

1_____

a one word title, a noun that tells what your poem is about

2_____, _____

two adjectives that describe what you're writing about

3_____, _____, _____

three -ing participles that describe what your poem is about

4_____

a phrase that tells more about what you're writing about

5_____

a synonym for your title, another noun that tells what your poem is about

Cinquain Reflections Worksheet

1. What do you like most about your poem?

2. If you could change something about the poem, what would you change?

3. Of the poems that you heard when we shared our cinquain, which poems did you like best and why?

4. What will you do differently the next time you write a poem?

Name_____

Date_____

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